

Hello, My name is Sandy Shull and I own Birds & Beasleys, a small business in downtown Helena. The issue for me isn't WHO gets to be on the state's health insurance, but HOW do we get access to health insurance.

Let me tell you my story. I am a native Montanan who went out of state to find a better living. I returned to Montana to work at the family business. I was able to work for the family business because my partner's retirement package from the state of Oregon included domestic partner coverage. When my partner became Medicare eligible I needed to find different health care coverage.

This is what I found: I don't qualify for John Morrison's plan, because I don't have enough employees, The Montana Employee Association covers my employees, but not me, the owner. I was fortunate to qualify for a health saving account insurance for \$175 a month which had a \$5000 deductible and limited preventive care.

My partner has recently been hired by the state of Montana and I now have excellent health care coverage again for \$165 a month.

Let me put this in perspective for you. I am a community based business person who depends on the community to support me and so I support them. We contribute \$4000 this year to 114 organizations. Whenever the Girl Scouts, a school organization, or anyone supporting a cause for the good of the community needs a donation for their fundraiser, they come to us. And we are happy to give. Small businesses like mine, are the backbones of our communities and I am able to continue to own and work in my business because I have access to the state's health insurance. I urge you not to take away the access, but find more ways to make it accessible.

How many times have we heard, I work for the state for the health insurance and how many of you value the benefit of the state health care because you are elected officials.

Remember I am one of the fortunate ones because I've been able to access health insurance. Until we have some kind of national health care, we need to find as many avenues as we can to allow people access to health care, not work at taking it away.

Thank you for your time.

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